

“NCEA/Global”: The Global Change Research Program and the National Center for Environmental Assessment
in the Office of Research and Development, U. S. EPA, Washington, DC 20460
– last updated September 25, 2001 (Previously posted August 30, 2001)–

-----UPDATED SEPTEMBER 25, 2001 -----
Please note that questions 5 and 6 are new.

QUESTIONS FROM POTENTIAL APPLICANTS & EPA’S RESPONSES
in regard to Reseach Solicitation NCEA-01-01:

“A Request for Applications for Cooperative Agreements to
Provide Assistance to State/Tribal/Other Local Environmental Protection Agencies to
Conduct Location-Specific Assessments of the Impacts of Climate Change & Variability on
Aquatic Ecosystems and Water Quality.”

It is ORD policy to insure that all competitors have equal access to information, so Section 5.5 of the solicitation (NCEA-01-01) provides that questions that are asked by potential applicants shall be posted along with EPA responses on the NCEA and Global Change Research Program websites. (Please email additional questions to Dave Kelley at kelley.dave@epa.gov.)

1. Question from potential applicant: Is there an assumption of global change and therefore we, as investigators, just look at local impacts of the change; or is it the reverse: look at local change and try to project the global impacts?

EPA’s Response: As stated in section 3.1, “The *primary purpose* of the research solicited by this document is to build **local capacity** for location-specific assessments of the impacts of global change on aquatic ecosystems and water quality... The *secondary purpose* is to generate insights at the local scale that can be used to inform larger-scale assessments.”

Thus, investigators shall assess the potential **local impacts** of climate change. An understanding of local impacts may also inform assessments of **impacts** at larger spatial scales. There is no mention in the solicitation of assessment of the effects of local actions on global climate; thus, proposals to look at the effects of local actions on climate would not be responsive to the solicitation.

2. Question from potential applicant: Is the grant program really about empowerment? To give the local people data and tools to help them influence decisions? From that, is there the ability to do training as part of the proposal?

EPA’s Response: See section 3.0 and section 5.2. Section 3.0 describes what the solicitation is “really about.” Section 5.2 describes the detailed review criteria that will

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be used by the review panel to evaluate the merit of the applications. A training component could be included in a research proposal. The review panel will evaluate the proposal’s overall quality and responsiveness to the solicitation in determining whether that training component is appropriate and valuable.

3. Question from potential applicant: Does the maximum specific award (the way it is worded in the memo) total up to \$300,000 per year? Or is it intended to be \$100,000 per year for three years?

EPA’s Response: As stated in section 1.0 and section 4.2, the value of each cooperative agreement award is estimated to range from \$25,000 to \$100,000 spread out over a period of one to three years. [Note: there is no minimum, but EPA does not expect to receive many applications for less than \$25,000.] Depending upon the availability of funds, the total amount available for **all** awards for the **entire** period (up to three years) is approximately \$300,000.

A project may last between one and three years. Regardless of the proposed project duration, a project could receive up to \$100,000.

4. Question from potential applicant: Could you please elaborate on the nature of the collaboration with EPA? How involved will EPA become in the research, field work, etc.?

EPA’s Response: Applicants propose the extent and nature of collaboration that they desire in the proposal. Please review section 3.2 for a description of EPA’s potential collaboration. The list does not specifically include field work, and it is unlikely that EPA will be involved in fieldwork. EPA is more likely to supply expertise in written and verbal form. For example, EPA might work with recipients to refine the research plan, identify feasible methods and approaches, advise recipients on methods for engaging stakeholders, provide references, synthesize scientific information, assist in model and data interpretation, develop conclusions, and present information (e.g., reports, papers, presentations, decision tools).

The Review Panel will evaluate the appropriateness of the applicants’ proposal for collaborating with EPA. (See Review Criterion 5.2.2.D.) The technical assistance that the applicant proposes to receive from EPA should be appropriate to NCEA/Global’s mission, its technical capabilities, and the expertise of its staff. Please note that the criterion for evaluation is appropriateness, not extent, of involvement. A substantive role must be proposed to meet the criteria for cooperative agreements (see section 3.2, first paragraph), but the collaboration proposed could be extensive or limited.

5. Question from potential applicant: I am working with a group of Hawaiian taro farmers and Hawaiian organizations. They are considering applying to your cooperative agreement program

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in response to the "Location-specific assessment" RFA. The work here involves water use for native agricultural and cultural practices. There is a possibility of some water being returned to streams which have been de-watered for sugar agriculture for many decades. How such stream ecosystems might respond to this is of interest both to Hawaiians and to stream ecologists since changes in rainfall patterns may bring such alterations about naturally in the future. The information provided at your site raised a couple of questions relating to the applicability of your program for the projects planned. Foremost is the fact that EPA views these as collaborative with EPA scientists (page 5 of the RFA). **How are such collaborations initiated and who are the EPA personnel involved (i.e. do we seek collaborators in Hawaii or only at NCEA offices)?** You spoke to part of this in your helpful Q&A letter, but the question of which EPA offices collaborations are to be involved, and the mechanism for initiating this collaboration was still not clear to us.

EPA's Response: EPA's collaboration will be negotiated with applicants after the Review Panel has submitted its recommendations to the Global Change Research Program's Program Director. ORD policy restricts communication about cooperative agreements that are undergoing competition. We understand that this makes it difficult for applicants to fully develop the collaborative nature of their proposals before they have been selected for awards. All applicants face this same difficulty, and the Review Panel will keep this in mind when evaluating the proposed collaborative role for NCEA/Global.

Applicants can review the solicitation's information about EPA GCRP's mission, and the technical capabilities and expertise of the staff and develop reasonable proposals for collaboration on that basis. NCEA/Global scientists expect to work with award recipients. Collaboration with other EPA scientists is welcome if it is desired by the applicants and if EPA scientists are willing and available. Collaboration with any EPA scientist should be initiated after the competition. (The purpose of this policy is to ensure a fair competition.) A detailed discussion between successful applicants and NCEA/Global staff can take place after competition, and plans for collaboration can be refined.

6. Question from potential applicant: A second point is raised on page 9 that states that the principal beneficiary must be a non-federal body with the authority to implement CWA and SDWA compliance. In Hawaii, that is limited to the State Department of Health. So does this mean that for a project to be considered the DOH must be the main focus of the work?

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EPA’s Response: To be eligible for an award, applicants must be eligible to receive federal assistance under Section 104 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), Section 1442 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), or Section 103 of the Clean Air Act (CAA). Eligibility may not be restricted to the Hawaii State Department of Health. You may want to review the statutes to determine your eligibility. (We don't have enough information about your organizations, or the expertise to give you a definitive answer.) It does sound as if the Hawaii State Department of Health is clearly eligible, given its role in implementing the CWA and the SDWA. To ensure your eligibility, you might decide to involve them in the proposal. There may also be others in your state who are responsible for protecting stream ecosystems. Section 4.1 requires that the proposed work benefit a non-federal institution with authority to implement, or responsibilities for compliance with, the CWA or SDWA. Any institution that has responsibilities for protecting stream ecosystems could potentially benefit from a project to assess the effects of climate change on those systems. Section 4.1 provides that you may get a letter of endorsement from such an institution. You could expand your search beyond the Hawaii Department of Health. Section 4.1 notes that in addition to state agencies, tribal, territorial or local governments may have responsibilities, and are potential sources of endorsement letters.

Our last piece of guidance may be frustratingly general, but recommendations for funding will be made by the Review Panel, and no one can be sure of their determinations in advance. Please review section 5.2 carefully. These criteria will be used by the panel, and may serve as your best guide for developing a strong proposal.